

Lak language

The **Lak language** (лакку маз, *lakːu maz*) is a Northeast Caucasian language forming its own branch within this family. It is the language of the Lak people from the Russian autonomous republic of Dagestan, where it is one of six standardized languages. It is spoken by about 157,000 people.

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History


In 1864 Russian ethnographer and linguist P. K. Uslar wrote: "Kazikumukh grammar or as I called it for short in the native language, the Lak grammar, Lakku maz, the Lak language, is ready".^[3]

In 1890, P. K. Uslar compiled a textbook on Lak grammar titled *The Lak Language*. It stated under the title "Lak alphabet": "The proposed alphabet is written for people who name themselves collectively Lak, genitive Lakral. From among these people each one is named separately Lakkuchu 'Lakian man', the woman – Lakkusharssa 'Lakian woman'. Their homeland they name Lakral klanu – 'Lak place'".^[3]

Lak has throughout the centuries adopted a number of loanwords from Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Russian.^[4] Ever since Dagestan was part of the Soviet Union and later Russia, the largest portion of loanwords have come from Russian, especially political and technical vocabulary. There is a newspaper and broadcasting station in Lak.^[5]

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Dagestan of 1994, Lak was named as the state language along with Russian and some other major languages spoken in Dagestan (about 20 local languages are unwritten and have no official status). Lak is used as a teaching tool in elementary school and taught as a subject in secondary schools, vocational schools and universities. There is a Lak newspaper, "Ilchi".

The standard Lak language is based on the dialect of the city of Kumukh. This city should not be confused with the Kumyk ethnic group, a Turkic people also present in the Caucasus. Lak has the following dialects: Kumukh, Vitskhi, Arakul, Balkhar, Shadni, Shalib, Vikhli, Kuli, and Kaya.

Lak	
лакку маз (<i>lakːu maz</i>)	
Native to	Russia
Region	Southern Dagestan
Ethnicity	Laks
Native speakers	152,050 (2010 census) ^[1]
Language family	Northeast Caucasian <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lak
Writing system	Cyrillic (Lak alphabet) <div></div> Latin (formerly)
Official status	
Official language in	 Dagestan
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	lbe
Glottolog	lakk1252 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/lakk1252) ^[2]
 <div><div><div></div>Lak</div></div>	

Initially Lak by lexicon was found to be close to Dargin and the two were often combined in one Lak–Dargin subgroup of Dagestani languages. However, further research has led linguists to conclude that this association was weak.

Phonology

Consonants



Cover page of the textbook on Lak grammar named "Лакскій языкъ" or *The Lak language* compiled by P. K. Uslar in 1890



"Лакская азбука" or *The Lak alphabet*. Many called the language "Bak Tak" from Peter Uslar's Lak Grammar.

Consonants^{[6][7]}

		<u>Labial</u>	<u>Dental</u>	<u>Postalveolar</u>		<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>		<u>Uvular</u>		<u>Pharyngeal</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
				plain	lab.		plain	lab.	plain	lab.		
<u>Nasal</u>		m	n									
<u>Plosive</u>	<u>voiced</u>	b	d				g	g ^w			ʔ	
	<u>voiceless lenis</u>	p	t				k	k ^w	q	q ^w		ʔ
	<u>voiceless fortis</u>	pː	tː				kː	kː ^w	qː	qː ^w		
	<u>ejective</u>	pʼ	tʼ				kʼ	k ^w ʼ	qʼ	q ^w ʼ		
<u>Affricate</u>	<u>voiceless lenis</u>		ʈs	ʈʃ	ʈʃ ^w							
	<u>voiceless fortis</u>		ʈsː	ʈʃː	ʈʃː ^w							
	<u>ejective</u>		ʈsʼ	ʈʃʼ	ʈʃ ^w ʼ							
<u>Fricative</u>	<u>voiceless lenis</u>		s	ʃ	ʃ ^w		x	x ^w	χ	χ ^w		h
	<u>voiceless fortis</u>		sː	ʃː	ʃː ^w		xː	xː ^w	χː	χː ^w		
	<u>voiced</u>	v ~ w ~ β	z	ʒ	ʒ ^w				ʁ	ʁ ^w		
<u>Trill</u>			r								ʁ	
<u>Approximant</u>			l	j								

- The consonants in orange are given by Schulze, but not by TITUS. The consonant /ʔ/ (grey) is given by TITUS, but not by Schulze.
- The sound transcribed here as a glottal stop is named rather ambiguously a "glottalic laryngeal" by both sources.

Vowels

Five vowels are presented as [a, e, i, o, u].

Grammar

Lak is one of the few North East Caucasian languages with verbal agreement for person. It generally only distinguishes only between speech-act participants and non-speech-act participants. In other words, the first- and second-person agreement markers are the same.^[8]

	Singular	Plural
1,2	-ra	-ru
3	-r / -ri / -Ø	

The free pronouns of Lak do distinguish first and second person.^[7]

	Singular		Plural
	<u>Absolutive</u>	<u>Oblique</u>	
1	<i>na</i>	<i>tːu-</i>	<i>žu(-)</i>
2	<i>ina</i>	<i>wi-</i>	<i>zu(-)</i>

Writing systems

The Lak language was written using the Arabic script until 1928. Afterwards it was written with a Latin alphabet for ten years, and since 1938 it has been written in Cyrillic.

The Lak alphabet in Cyrillic initially included 48 letters and later 54 letters with double letters as "тт", "пп", "чч", "хьхь", etc.:

А а	Аь аь	Б б	В в	Г г	Гь гь	Гь гь	Д д
Е е	Ё ё	Ж ж	З з	И и	Й й	К к	Кь кь
Кь кь	КІ кІ	Л л	М м	Н н	О о	Оь оь	П п
Пп пп	ПІ пІ	Р р	С с	Т т	ТІ тІ	У у	Ф ф
Х х	Хь хь	Хь хь	ХІ хІ	Ц ц	ЦІ цІ	Ч ч	ЧІ чІ
Ш ш	Щ щ	Ъ ъ	Ы ы	Ь ь	Э э	Ю ю	Я я

1928-1932

a b c d e ə g ɣ h ħ ħ̣ i j k ḳ l m n o ɵ p p̣ q q̣ r
s ṣ t ṭ u v x x̣ ʒ z ẓ ẓ̣ ʻ

1932-1937

a b c c̣ d e ə f g ɣ h i j k ḳ l m n o ɵ p p̣ q q̣ r s
ṣ ṣ̣ t ṭ u v x x̣ ʒ z ẓ ẓ̣ ʻ

Obsolete Lak alphabets in Latin script

References

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5. Илчи – Lak newspaper (<http://ilchi.etnosmi.ru>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110818090711/http://ilchi.etnosmi.ru/>) 2011-08-18 at the [Wayback Machine](#)
6. Consonant Systems of the North-East Caucasian Languages on TITUS DIDACTICA (<http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/didact/caucasus/nekklaut.htm#XFN5>)
7. The Lak Language – A quick reference, by Wolfgang Schulze (2007) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090413144902/http://www.lrz-muenchen.de/~wschulze/lak.pdf>)
8. Helmbrecht, J. (1996). "The Syntax of Personal Agreement in East Caucasian Languages". *Sprachtypol. Univ. Frsch. (STUF)* 49:127–48. Cited in Bhat, D.N.S. 2004. *Pronouns*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 26.

External links

- Lak Grammar by Wolfgang Schulze (<http://wschulze.userweb.mwn.de/Lak.htm>)
 - Transliteration of Lak (<http://transliteration.eki.ee/pdf/Lakh.pdf>)
 - Lak House – Lak culture and society site (<http://www.lakia.net/>)
 - Lak words (https://web.archive.org/web/20110719062742/http://lingweb.eva.mpg.de/cgi-bin/ids/ids.pl?com=simple_browse&lg_id=56)
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